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BRIEF PUKAPUKAN CASE HISTORY

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114 124 THE following case history is offered as a short commentary on courtship and marriage in Pukapuka.[1] Though it refers to contemporary adolescence, the freedom of youth that it unconsciously assumes represents both an old-time and modern approved (implicitly at least) social condition over which missionary teaching lies like a thin veneer that cracks at the slightest provocation.

114 124 181 The case history is very objective. Lua (all the names are pseudonyms) was simply asked to tell something of her childhood and life before and after marriage. The subjects that she has emphasised are entirely her own. They represent the approach to life of all Pukapukan women. The very objectivity of this document serves to make it entirely typical of the way any woman thinks about fundamental values in Pukapuka, though hardly of the way she acts. The Pukapukans are an extraverted people. They tend to live a life of vigorous action. It was impossible to get the informant to make any special effort to recall emotions or feeling-tones for salient situations in her life. The material she presents on adolescence is specially interesting, representing a type of behaviour in youthful sex-experience which is probably rare, sexual play, that is, which does not reach consummation. Perhaps there is here a personality difference which for some reason or other of childhood conditioning, obscure and unfathomable at this date, resulted in behaviour entirely different from that which was and is normal for maturing adolescents.

[21] [1] Collected on Pukapuka (Danger Island). Dictated in the Pukapukan dialect to Pearl Beaglehole and freely translated by her. Pukapukan social organization is discussed in *Ethnology of Pukapuka*, Bernice P. Bishop Museum, Bulletin 150, 1938, pp. 219-385. The map of Pukapuka (*Ethnology*, p. 18) may be consulted for place names referred to in this account.

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114 124 597 The first paragraphs annotate a somewhat typical conflict, which may be either acute or implicit, between loyalties to blood-parents and those to adopted parents, a conflict that is all the more striking here because Lua did not learn the identity of her own blood-parents until she was about five years old. Adoption occurs with great frequency in Pukapuka, either before or soon after birth. Its function in general is to obtain an heir who will continue the paternal descent-line. Informants were fond of dwelling on the heinousness of those blood-parents who seek to attract back to themselves children they have allowed to be adopted. [673] Along with stealing from village-controlled reserve food-lands *(motu)*, such disloyalty to the adopting parents may be classed as the supremely ugly Pukapukan sin.

114 776 Belief in spirits and the fear of their ghostly visitation upon the living is still very real. Dreams are caused by ghosts, sickness as well, sometimes otherwise unexplainable pregnancies. Children are also disciplined by the threat that [861] ghosts will catch them if they misbehave.

882 [532] Marriage for the Pukapukan did and does come relatively late in maturity. Its object is to secure children who will complete the continuity of the descent-line. Boys and girls formerly went naked until physiological maturity. Then they were formally tested and admitted to sociological adulthood. The girl was allowed to wear the coconut-leaf kilt, the boy his coconut-leaf or pandanus *malo*. Along with this went full participation in village activities and an adult's share in food divisions. Thereafter the young people were given considerable personal freedom. Such freedom was [848] accepted and enjoyed to the full. The infrequent children born out of wedlock were accepted with thanks by the mother's family because they meant extra food in village [836] food-divisions. Chastity before marriage was and is a meaningless concept to the Pukapukan. When the young people tire of a life of freedom, or when one forms a romantic attraction for another of the opposite sex, then a permanent [585] alliance is announced by the establishment of a patrilocal domicile, socially validated by the holding of a food-division and the exchange of gifts between the families of the bride and groom.

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Lua is 34 years of age. She is friendly, intelligent, and capable. She was one of our best informants, and her honesty is unquestioned. 115

LUA'S STORY

My parents, now deceased, were members of Loto village. I was their first child, born in 1902, when they were both fairly young. Four children were born subsequently but all died. My parents never adopted other children. I was adopted soon after birth by an old couple who had also adopted my father when he was a boy. I lived permanently with this couple from the time when my adopted mother weaned me. I learned at about the age of five that they were not my real parents. No one, as I remember, told me of the fact of my adoption, but on those occasions when my real parents took me to their house for a day I noticed that they treated me differently from my adopted parents. They seemed much kinder to me and much more loving. In some way I must have sensed the situation. I cannot say now very definitely how they treated me but I must have been gradually impressed by something or other. Later on, other children commented to me on the way I was going to my blood-parents and then I was certain. I was always happy to see them. 159 [165] [597] 159 593 597

Shortly after this my adopted father died. I felt pity for my adopted mother thereafter, but I really longed to be with my blood-parents. My adopted mother was uniformly kind to me. The old lady was specially solicitous about me whenever I got into quarrels, and always sought out the one who injured me in childish squabbles and scolded her soundly. This was quite noteworthy, because other parents were not so concerned for their children and let them get on with their companions as best they could.

My visits to my blood-parents became infrequent and continued so until the death of my adopted mother which occurred when I was about 12 years old. I remember the death-scene and the mourning-wake, but it was just like other wakes and I cannot remember my feelings at the time. After this I returned to live permanently with my blood-parents. Then it was that the last child was born to my mother. I remember this. I with other children stood 159 593

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159 watching the delivery. For some reason it was an extremely
593 difficult birth and I became terribly frightened by what I
[845] saw. The child was born dead, but my mother soon became well again.

I loved my father much more than I loved my mother. My mother was never unkind to me, but it was my father who did most for me and gave me all the little things that I wanted. This is the reason I loved him more. My father not only sewed up clothes for me, but he washed them as well so that I would always have a clean dress for school or church. I do not think that I ever wished to marry him.

159 I remember that as a child I was especially frightened
775 of old people. When I passed them on the road or in the
888 bush it always seemed as if they were threatening me with knives, as if they wished to cut me up. I was afraid of ghosts too, like everyone else. Adults always frightened children, and children each other, with the cry, "Look out for the ghost!"

159 As a girl I loved to play at having babies. We used
857 immature coconuts as babies just as the little girls do today.
524 Sometimes only girls played this game, at other times both girls and boys, aged 10 years or so. We played at marriage and intercourse. After a pretended cohabitation, the girl-mother stuffed the coconut inside her dress and realistically gave birth to her child, imitating labor-pains and letting the nut fall at the proper moment. My mother did not like me to
[861] play this game, and she whipped me whenever she caught me at it. But I played it frequently all the same, because all the girls thought it was the best game. Other games we played were those that are common today, such as hide and seek, guessing games, water sports, and the game of a mock court where people are arrested by policemen for committing adultery (the game of *woi tule* that the children of Yato told you that they played all the time during their recent stay at their reserve islet of Motu Kotawa). I had many girl friends as a child, and we used to play together during most of every day.

159 When I was about 12 years old my father died in Samoa. Several years after this my mother married a man younger than herself. I was glad to have a new father for a change.

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These two, however, went to Rarotonga, and I went to live with my paternal uncle. 159

It was about this time while my mother was away that I started to menstruate. I suppose I must have been about 16 years old, much older I think than other girls when they start their periods. I was very frightened when I first saw the blood, because no one had told me in advance what to expect. I think most girls are frightened at this time. Two years after this I married. 159 145

During these years before my marriage I had many girl friends. One girl, Tolu, older than I and who married before me, was my special friend. We helped each other with special tasks. If one had to collect firewood or harvest *taro* from the gardens then the other would go along too. We often shared our food together. I helped Tolu with her courtship. She would ask me to come and sleep with her on those nights when she wanted to go off to the bush with her lover. When the boy came to the house, Tolu would pinch me and tell me to answer for her should her mother or anyone call to ask if she was safe at home. At this time I did not meet boys or men in the bush. I was very fond of Tolu and when we slept together we would hug each other. I was never annoyed when Tolu went off with men. I was much more proud that I was in her secret and knew something that others did not know. 159 572 836

Before I had menstruated for the first time I had many meetings with young men in the bush. They happened like this. When I was 14 or 15 and living in my father's brother's household, my uncle went to stay for a time with a sick sister in Yato village. In the evening I used to take him his food from our house. Going across the causeway that joins the eastern and western sections of Yato I was grabbed by a young man who asked me where I was going. I said I was taking food to my father. He said, " Hurry, I'll be waiting for you here." I said to him, " No, I'm going to sleep there." Then I passed him by and went to my father. Later in the evening when I returned he was waiting for me. He was a Yato villager, two years older than I, and distantly related, being my mother's mother's father's brother's daughter's daughter's son. He said to me that we should both go to the bush. I told him no, saying that I had not menstruated 159 836

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159 836 yet and that I was afraid that intercourse would prevent my menses from starting. We argued together for a while, he urging me to come with him and I asked to be allowed to go home. Then he asked me where I slept. I told him on top of the house platform on such-and-such a side. "But," I said, "don't come yet; wait till everyone is asleep. My sister will see you now because we sleep together." We separated then. I went to bed in my house, lying with my sister on the platform, the elders sleeping below. I didn't sleep but lay listening. He entered, stumbled and made a noise. I was very frightened. He climbed up on to the platform, but my parents heard the creaking and began to stir, asking who was making the noise. The young man hurriedly slipped out of the house. He was frightened too. I often saw him after this but I never had intercourse with him.

On another occasion I and a girl friend named Wa went to the beach near the causeway in the early evening. Coming back along the lagoon we saw two people some distance away and we took them to be the village policeman and his wife. As we came near we found they were two young men who grabbed us as we tried to pass them. We could not run away. I told the boys that my father would whip them for interfering with us. The boys said, "You won't go home; we'll stay and all go to the bush. You girls will enjoy it." We said we would go home first and see if our parents were asleep, then the two boys could come for us. The boys agreed. Then the curfew gong sounded and we began to go off home, but the boys would not let us go. They held onto our arms. The policeman came along the beach and saw all four of us together. I was frightened, ran home, closed the house door behind me and fastened it. Then the policeman came to the house and scolded me. My father woke up and asked me what the policeman wanted. I said I did not know. My father went to sleep again and I was so frightened by the boys that I never went to the bush with them at any time.

On another occasion still, I and my two sisters[2] Wa and Lima called in at a house where only one young man happened

[2] These girls were her classificatory sisters, just as when Lua refers to her parents or father in these last paragraphs she means her classificatory parents.

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to be sitting. He said to us, "Shall we go?" He meant to the bush, of course. We said to him, "We're three, you're one." He said, no, he could easily find two more boys. We agreed to this and promised to watch for the three boys after our parents were asleep. The boys came to our house late at night. One of them grabbed Wa's feet. She pinched us and told us to get up and come along. We went off with the boys to a deserted place on the outer beach where lovers often meet. We got there and then coupled off. The first boy with whom we had arranged the meeting took me. I protested against this. I said to him, "I don't want you. You're a fellow who has had intercourse with other women long before this." He argued with me. Another boy chose Wa but Wa would not have him. The third got Lima but she would not have him. The boys got angry with us. "Are you just infants?" they said. "Yes, we are just children," we girls answered together. We were very stubborn. The boys got disgusted with us and simply walked off leaving us in the dark bush by ourselves. Then we got angry in turn and went home. 159 836

There seem to have been many instances of this sort of ineffective love-making in my early career. Somehow or other, I always got frightened or something went wrong.

Shortly after my first menses my sister Tolu suggested that it would be a good idea for me to marry her brother. I did not want this. My mind was already set on Ono. One day Ono sent a child with a message asking me to come and talk with him. I went to him that night and he asked me to marry him. I liked Ono but I was afraid my adopted parents would not agree to our marriage. Ono was a man of Ngake village and they wanted me to marry someone from Loto. Ono was confident he could win over my parents by talking to them. I told him to try. He asked and was refused. He spoke to me another night saying he would wait and be patient. We met regularly at night. We hugged and embraced but I was afraid to have intercourse with him. Ono asked my parents a second time to be allowed to marry me but again they refused. Later however they asked me whether I still wished to marry Ono. I said yes. Then they said they would leave it up to me. 159 584

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159 584 836 I went to the bush with Ono and talked to him. He asked me to go to Motu Ko, to the reserve islet of Ngake village, when the people went there to make copra, instead of staying at home and going with the villagers of Lotc to their reserve of Uta. Because my mother and step-father were Ngake villagers I could go with them to Motu Ko without causing comment and in this way I could meet Ono. I arranged this and met Ono the first night we spent at the copra village. I had intercourse with Ono that night. I was frightened this first time. Ono told me it might hurt but it didn't. We met in a place where there were no other people present. Except during my periods we had intercourse every night, four, three, or two times a night. That is not very often. A woman can keep it up as long as, or longer than a man. We were very young and enjoyed our nightly visits to the deserted places on the outer beach. After we returned from the reserve I continued to see Ono in the bush. Then my mother died and soon afterwards we were married. [833]

159 I do not remember much about Ono when he was a boy. When I would go swimming with my girl friends in the pool I often saw Ono there swimming with the boys. I think I fancied him then. He was not like the other boys. He did not come near me in the pool and I liked him for not doing this. What attracted me about him was his height. He was very tall for a Pukapukan and he had a lot of brown hair. Maybe he was like my father but I don't remember this.

159 593 We were married in 1918. Ono died in 1929. We never quarrelled and he was always very good to me. I was never unfaithful to him and he never went with other women. Maybe I have said only the best about him, because now I begin to recall our life together I remember that he had a terrible temper. He whipped me once with a stick when he was unjustly suspicious of my visits to the bush to get *taro* from my gardens. All men whip their wives at one time or another, all Pukapukan men, at any rate, because they are very suspicious; but Ono did not do it very much to me, and I suppose that is why I at first forgot it. Ono's father lived with us for a while. Then Ono quarrelled with the old man, [837]

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who was easily angered, and he went to live in another house.

After we had been married for some time Ono told me to have a child. I was afraid I could not. I thought that my mind was not sufficiently set on having a child. But after two years I bore a son. I wanted the first child to be a girl, Ono wanted a boy. We had intercourse almost every night without exception right up to the time that labor pains set in. The delivery was hard. It lasted a day, a night, and until noon the next day. Ono helped me with his arms, holding me and giving me all the support I needed. My milk came in three days. It was plentiful. We waited for a month after the delivery until the blood and water had dried up before having intercourse again. The second child, a boy, and the third, a girl, came along after this and I cannot remember anything special. Our fourth child, a boy, died after he had reached the crawling stage. Soon after the birth of the fifth child, another boy, Ono died.

We buried Ono in his family cemetery. Not long after this, Witu, whose wife was dead, came to court me as did many other men. They thought that I would make a good wife for them because I had so many children. I did not like the way the men came to the house at night because I thought the children would wake and see us together. When Witu asked me to marry him I agreed because I wanted someone to be a father to my children. Witu had had a son by his first wife but the child was dead. I took my children and went to live in Witu's house, the house where we are living now down by the pond. Witu is a good husband to me. He is never angry. He is always pleasant. He is a good fisherman. He is a good lover. These two babies that I have now, they are Witu's sons. He is delighted with them. That is why you always see him playing with them if he is home when you come to our house.